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ABSTRACT

The demands of scholarly articles, as opposed to other forms of writing, are discussed. The advantages of the article format for providing rationale, for sharing critical ideas between colleagues, and for achieving the linkage of professionals within a given field are expounded upon. Special attention is paid to the writing of scholarly articles in the field of teacher education.
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Selecting Articles for Publication (Notes to
Scholars and Referees in Teacher Education)

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"Publish or perish" has been so frequently used to describe the life of the university scholar that the values and uses of scholarly article writing remain unexamined. The well-known and prosaic reasons for having one's articles published need no review. It may be useful, however, to consider the ideals of scholarly article writing. Why should scholars write articles? What criteria should scholarly journals use in selecting articles for publication?

Different methods of inquiry cause disciplines to develop their fields of study in distinctive ways. As a result, scholarly journals in the humanities, physical sciences, social sciences and professions are somewhat diverse in format, emphasis, and mode of analysis. Nevertheless, there seem to be some generalizations which do distinguish scholarly articles and journals from popular, trade, organizational, or other forms of non-scholarly publication. Similarly, the reasons for reading scholarly articles are significantly different from those offered for reading non-scholarly publications.

The first distinctive quality of a scholarly article is its rationale. Implicitly, or in a direct manner, the writer somehow deals with the question, "How do you know that?" "On what basis do you claim this?" "What supports your position?" Arguments or ideas based entirely upon common sense, upon what we all accept as true, or upon the

unreflected and unchallenged assumptions of popular culture are not sufficient. Instead, the scholarly article derives from some way of knowing that is amenable to testing or criticism. This way of knowing may depend on data derived from research. It may be theoretic. It may embody personal experience, conceptualized in terms of some theory or research. It may even depend on the assertions of the great (and not so great) in a particular discipline. The critical point is that the writer (and the reader) are well aware of the extent to which research, theory, experience and ideas of authorities are being utilized in the article to answer the ultimate question of all scholars: "How do you know that's true?"

The second characteristic of scholarly articles is that they have an integrity of form; they are intended to be articles and not summaries or excerpts from major works. At the other extreme they are not inflated letters or unedited speeches. If a major volume can be adequately summarized in a fifteen-page article, it is legitimate to ask why the major opus is necessary. Similarly, a brief excerpt can never capture the values of an entire creative work, without losing the sense of completeness and the esthetic benefits which derive from involvement with the longer form. An article is not intended to serve as a midget or nickel version of a grander form. Sonatas and etudes

have an integrity and value of their own. They are neither short symphonies nor the highlights of an opera.

The length and form of an article make them ideal vehicles for expanding a concept, sharpening a controversy, advocating a new idea, criticizing a product, sharing an insight, drawing an implication, extending a point of view, refuting a finding, supporting a conclusion, exemplifying a condition, questioning an assumption, sharing a hypothesis, defending a contention, synthesizing a point of view, analyzing a situation, (re)defining a problem, revising a position, proposing a solution, presenting some data, comparing approaches, contrasting alternatives, evaluating methodologies, reviewing the known, suggesting next steps, explaining a cause, or offering calculated hunches.

In contrast to books, chapters, monographs, or complete studies, articles are more difficult to write because they must be brief. There is no room for repetition. There is insufficient space to make weak arguments, give poor examples, cite only partially appropriate bibliography. There is no way to overlook turgid prose, or, on the other hand, to use overly condensed jargon which requires even colleagues to engage in multiple rereadings of each sentence. Without a precise formula, a sound article will nevertheless have a "comfort range" for the reader. This "comfort range" refers to the amount of material presented, the depth to

which ideas are pursued and the density of the language. Most articles should be capable of being fully digested by colleagues in a quarter- to half-an-hour. If more than one hour is required, the "comfort range" has probably been exceeded and it is likely that a longer form is being passed off as an article, or that the language has been inadequately edited and demands too many rereadings.

The third characteristic of a scholarly article is that it permits a field of study to exist even though scholars are dispersed. The most successful articles leave the reader with a few basic ideas. These tend to be remembered and to have an impact on subsequent thinking and behavior. Such articles form a chain among colleagues who may rarely or never see or contact one another but who remain linked by the same body of ideas, ways of viewing reality, and questions to be addressed. Articles compensate for the fact that colleagues work in various and distant institutions and are not able to talk (formally or informally) on a regular basis. In a real sense articles are superior to speech since committing ideas to writing requires a greater control of content and clarity. Articles also provide a written record which will in the future mark the discipline's progress in method and content. The quip, "I never know what I believe until I hear myself say it," is for the scholar changed to, "I never know what ideas I hold strongly enough

to defend until I commit the ideas to writing." The discipline of article writing, therefore, has a salutary impact on the scholarly writer and a positive impact on the literature of the discipline. In truth, it would be hard to imagine the day-to-day functioning of a field of inquiry in which scholars are denied the opportunity of sharing articles with each other. What form of communication could possibly take its place? Long phone calls, carefully-worded letters, the making of tapes--all lack the advantages of the written article for providing rationale, for sharing critical ideas, and for achieving the linkage of colleagues.

Thus far I have dealt with the issue without special reference to teacher education. Article writing in teacher education, however, raises special problems and opportunities because teacher education is not a neatly circumscribed discipline. It is a very broad field of inquiry. Even the briefest sketch of the range of study, thought and criticism encompassed in teacher education can be overpowering. The outline which follows simply sketches several topics and issues which fall within the parameters of teacher education. Bear with me while I run through the outline.

I. The Purposes of Teacher Education

What are the philosophic underpinnings, the goals and objectives, the range of meanings attached to the uses of the profession?

- A. The development of programs for preparing educational practitioners to continue the schools and related institutions.
- B. The development of programs for preparing practitioners to change, modify, enhance, improve the educational institutions and programs in our society.
- C. The issues related to developing educators who will resist present forms and create new educational structures.
- D. The historic, social, religious, economic, political, scientific, and other forces which serve as bases for developing teacher education programs.

II. The Nature of the Content to be Learned by Practitioners

What issues relate to the importance of various subject matters, their sequence, depth, and the need for balance among them?

- A. Liberal studies
- B. Areas of specialization
- C. Professional studies

- D. Self understanding
- E. Knowledge of institutional settings and
bureaucracies

III. The Nature of the Student

How do student characteristics, aspirations, and
cultures impact on teacher preparation programs?

- A. College youth
- B. Non-traditional students
- C. Inservice practitioners
- D. Selection criteria for entrance into programs

IV. The Nature of Adult Change

How should teacher education take account of
teachers and other practitioners as learners?

- A. Learning theories
- B. Developmental Approaches
- C. Organizational models

V. The Nature of the Trainers

What issues pertain to the competence, experiences,
motives and effectiveness of teacher educators?

- A. College faculty
- B. School practitioners (Administrators and
supervisors)
- C. Peers and cooperating personnel
- D. Experts in supporting fields
- E. Media, material and educative experiences

VI. The Nature of the Settings

What conditions control the educational experiences offered to practitioners? How does the control operate?

- A. Impact of university settings
- B. Influences of professional laboratory experiences, simulation, direct experiences
- C. Environmental press of various work situations

VII. The Culture of the Profession

The special impact of teaching as opposed to other professional practice on the work of the individual practitioner has become an increasingly fertile area. What should we know about each of the following?

- A. Language, jargon of teaching
- B. Forms of analysis (e.g., the medical model-- diagnosis, treatment, evaluation)
- C. Role structure, status, values
- D. Forms of practitioner evaluation
- E. Bureaucratic functionary vs. independent professional

VIII. Governance

Who controls the preparation, licensure and continuing education of educational personnel? What is the impact of control by different constituencies?

- A. Licensure
- B. Accreditation
- C. Control of programs
- D. Unionization
- E. Political-lay controls

IX. Research and Evaluation

In all of the above there is a growing emphasis on the systematic gathering and use of data in making decisions. This form of research faces special problems.

- A. Longitudinal studies
- B. Case studies
- C. Controlled studies
- D. Historical descriptive studies
- E. Applications of findings from related disciplines
- F. Forms of program evaluation
- G. Forms of practitioner evaluation

It should now be evident why the three guidelines proposed for any scholarly article writing assume even greater importance for teacher educators. Providing a clear rationale, utilizing the form of the article to maximum advantage and linking dispersed colleagues became absolute necessities in a broad field of inquiry.

The range of issues which have a significant impact on the preparation of professional educators is clearly wide

and varied. We do not have a neat discipline, circumscribed by a common jargon, a single method of generating new knowledge and a homogenous group of compatible experts. We are a diverse group which is associational, rather than communal in nature. Whenever scholarly concerns relate to an aspect of preparation there is an infusion of strength from another discipline. In short, teacher education is an eclectic field derived from many disciplines and studies. This diversification is a source of strength--the vigor of the hybrid--and an opportunity to remain open to future ideas. Traditional scholars may peruse this outline and snicker, "You cannot call a polyglot of concerns a discipline." It is, nevertheless, possible to view my list as merely a beginning--an early attempt--to delimit intentionally porous borders which enable teacher education as a field of inquiry to remain open and susceptible to all new forms of knowing. Such forms of knowledge include knowledge derived from established and emerging academic disciplines, from other broad fields of study, from the practices of practitioners and from the analyses of social and institutional settings in which practitioners operate. An inevitable result of this approach is that there are a great many individuals who develop concepts or data which contribute to teacher education, a smaller number operate in fields from which teacher education is derived, and the smallest number are individuals who perceive of

themselves primarily as teacher educators. While these full-time teacher educators have never been surveyed, my calculated hunch is that most of them are in schools and departments of education, a very small number are scattered about other academic departments, a smaller number are in lower schools, and a few work for state departments of public instruction, the central offices of large city schools, and the federal government. These individuals have had graduate training in a wide range of traditional disciplines as well as in broad fields of study. There is no question in my mind that our diversity exists and that it will be intensified in future.

One implication of this heterogeneity is that we must communicate in standard forms rather than through an esoteric jargon. Second, we must also substantiate our methods of study since they represent diverse procedures, not a commonly held body of knowledge. Third, we must remind each other of our different basic assumptions. Finally, wherever possible, we should state our goals or intentions.

Surely, therefore, the diversity of teacher education as a field of inquiry is a source of scholarly strength. At the same time it inevitably raises the standards of communication that are required in our articles. And this standard will ultimately be raised by the teacher educators and other contributors who submit and who read our articles--not by our editors.